

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the specification as follows:

Please replace paragraph starting at page 8, second paragraph, with the following rewritten paragraph:

Each of the collimated beams 208 created by the diffractive beam splitter 204 illuminates a separate volume of the sample 216 and thus results in a separate returned beam, such as the returned beam 220 resulting from one of the collimated beams 208. The intensity of each of these returned beams 220 depends on the efficiency with which each region of the sample 216 scatters laser light. Each of the returned beams 220 is brought to a separate focus by the ocular lens 222, with only the particular focus for the returned beam 220 being shown in FIG. 2 for clarity, with the focal point being indicated at ~~[[224]]~~ 225.

Please replace paragraph starting at page 12, first paragraph, with the following rewritten paragraph:

In yet another example form of the invention shown in FIG. 4 a parallel scanned confocal microscopy system 300 employs a reflection-mode spatial light modulator 302. A beam of light 304 is incident on the face of the spatial light modulator 302 (hereinafter SLM 302). The SLM 302 encodes a phase modulation on the beam of light 304 suitable for splitting the beam of light 304 into several independent beams, only one of which 304 is shown for clarity. Each of the beams of light 304 is directed by the same phase pattern into a distinct direction, with the depicted collimated beam 304 being directed at solid angle Ω away from an optical axis 306. Each of the collimated beams 304 created and directed by the phase pattern of the SLM 302 is transferred to the back aperture of the objective lens 214 (or other suitable focusing optical element) to create the diffraction limited focal point 224. In FIG. 1 the collimated beams 304 are transferred with two lenses 308 and 310 arranged to create a plane conjugate to the objective's back aperture at the center of the SLM 302. The optical axis 306 is thus established so that a beam of light passing from the SLM 302 along the optical axis 306 will pass through the center

of the objective's back aperture and come to a focus in the middle of the objective's focal plane. A beam such as the collimated beam 304 traveling at an angle of Ω with respect to this optical axis 306 passes through the middle of the back aperture at an angle and thus forms the focal point [[224]] 225 away from the center of the focal plane. The beam splitter 218 serves to direct the collimated beams 304 into the aperture of the objective lens 214.